

Divorce by [luxuriousvoyage11](#)

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Summary:

A fight between Karen and Ted Wheeler has Mike finding solace in El.

Divorce

It was now May in the small town of Hawkins, the harsh winter snow and temperatures long gone and replaced with a daily mixture of sun and clouds. Jane "El" Hopper was still housebound, courtesy of her adoptive father and Dr. Owens, but it didn't take long for weekly visits from her friends and boyfriend to start taking place.

Her dad knew the second she reunited with the party, first at the Byers and then a month later at the Snowball, that they would all stop at nothing to see each other again.

A typical Friday night for the girl was a TV marathon with Hopper. She had somehow managed to persuade him to watch Cheers, a sitcom she had found flipping through the channels on a quiet weekday.

At five o'clock, however, Hopper had called and informed her he wouldn't be home until after ten tonight, a crazy day at the station leaving him with boatloads of paperwork and only three available officers.

A part of her was disappointed, always looking forward to the calm night full of laughs and junk food with the chief; but then she realized she could now talk to Mike longer and her heart lifted.

The couple called each other every night from their supercoms, El's ability to strengthen the connection making the sound quality almost perfect.

She first reached out to him at 5:30 and was met with only static but she shrugged it off, figuring he was busy with the guys or watching Holly. She tried again an hour later, 6:30 and still no answer.

It went like that until 8:30 and she'd be lying if she said her feelings weren't slightly hurt; but she still looked forward to 9:00. That was their set time to talk every night, no matter what.

Their soft whispers and childish giggles filled both of their houses, the teens talking about everything from how their days were to

weekend plans to sweet nothings.

So, she sat on the couch and waited...

9:00

9:04

9:09

When the clock struck 9:15, El knew something was wrong. He never forgot to call and now the other several unanswered calls were causing her heart to drop into her stomach. She uttered one last "Mike," into the device only to met with the silence of static that filled the secluded cabin all night.

Something inside her was nagging at her that Mike needed her right now; and after all the times he helped her, she couldn't stop herself from throwing on a pair of dirty white sneakers and a light jacket. She quickly scribbled a note for Hopper on the dining room table, locked up the cabin, and ran towards Maple Street.

~

Mike sat on his twin-sized blue bed, cursing himself for creating the blowout that was currently happening downstairs. The guys had only been at his house until dinnertime, Lucas meeting Max at Benny's and Dustin and Will's mothers expecting them home for a family meal. When Mike sat at his own dinner table, a roasted chicken steaming in the middle, the sound of utensils clattering against the plates filled the usual tense environment.

Ted just sat there, barely acknowledging the fact that Karen had gotten a haircut or that Nancy wasn't even home or that Holly had grown a noticeable three inches during the winter months.

"So, Michael," his mom's voice began, breaking the silence, "how was school today?"

Mike always gave his mom credit; the older he got, the more he saw how hard she truly tried.

"It was good, Mr. Clarke is teaching us about the atomic theory and it's actually really interesting," he rambles, "did you know-"

"Michael, please," Ted says, shooting a serious look towards his son, "don't start that."

Mike feels his mouth close, his lips pressing together unsure if he's holding back a cry or scream. The rest of the dinner is eaten in silence, Karen digging her nails into the chair cushion to try and contain her temper.

Mike dumps the rest of his food in the trash and washes off his plate, leaving it in the sink and walking up the stairs.

His mom must've put Holly in her room shortly after because the fighting began less than twenty minutes after his departure. He hears his mothers screams and sobs about how he has three children who want his love and acceptance. About how he never acknowledges all of the hard work she puts into keeping the house clean and making a home cooked meal every night. About how he never loved her and doesn't care about anyone but himself.

Even during a fight, Mike never hears the man says anything; he doesn't even care enough to fight back or defend himself or reassure his loved ones that he's fond of them in the slightest.

Heavy footsteps make their way up the steps and down the end of the hall to his parent's room, the sobs of Karen still heard from downstairs.

Three minutes later, the door slams and Mike doesn't even need to look out his window to know a cab has come to pick up Ted Wheeler with a week's worth of clothes in his bag.

Cautiously, Mike opens his door and peaks into Holly's room, relieved to see her in bed watching Cinderella, before he hesitantly makes his way downstairs.

His mom is in the kitchen hunched over the sink and vigorously scrubbing the plates from what would've been a normal family dinner. She must feel his presence hovering in the archway because

her hands halt and she lets out a defeated sigh.

"It's never enough, Michael," she says breathlessly, "we'll never be enough."

Mike swallows the lump in his throat, already knowing the truth in her words. He hears her sniffle and she turns off the faucet, throwing the yellow sponge into the sink and making her way over to her son.

Her black mascara is smeared and wet under her eyes and it hurts Mike to think his father could make his mom look like that: so sad and disappointed and unhappy.

"I think Holly's asleep," he says, unsure of what to say.

She nods silently, looking over her son's face and he swears he sees her lower lip tremble before she makes her way upstairs.

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It's 9:30 when Mike hears a knock at his window, turning in his bed to see El's face peering through the glass. He quickly jumps out of bed and opens the window, pulling the girl in by her hand.

"El! What the hell were you thinking! How did you even get up there!"

She gives him a knowing look, the tiny bit of blood under her nostril evident.

"You-you can't do that! Someone could've seen you!" he shouts.

Her eyes narrow at his loud voice and she crosses her arms over her chest, "I called you. Five times."

He lets out a defeated sigh, looking down at El's curious brown eyes. "I'm sorry, El," he says apologetically, noting the hour, "I lost track of time and it was just... a bad night here."

Her head turns to the side questioningly, the sadness in his voice not escaping her.

"What happened?" she asks softly, taking his warm hand in her small, cold one.

He squeezes it slightly, feeling himself relax at her touch and slowly walking them over to sit on his bed. "My parents got into a fight again," he says, "but this time my dad just left."

She nods in understanding, remembering how she left after her fight with Hopper during her year of hiding in secret.

"He'll come back."

Mike shakes his head, taking his hand out of hers to run it through his unruly hair. "I don't know, El," he says, "I'm not even sure I want him to."

She looks over at her boyfriend and examines his face. His soft brown eyes are filled with so much sadness and confusion and she's wanting to make it all go away somehow, she's just not sure that's possible.

Her hand makes its way to his pale cheek, the touch startling him before his gaze meets her. The two just stare at one another, El's calming presence bringing a sense of comfort over him. He feels himself smile softly at her, leaning more into her touch until the sound of glass shattering is heard from outside his room.

Mike gets up from his bed and quietly opens his door, peaking out only to see his mom standing over one of the accent tables in the hallway. A picture frame lay face down on the carpet, glass surrounding it as she hovers over the broken pieces. He lets out a shaky breath before he closes his door and goes over to his bed to take El's hand.

"Can we go for a walk?"

~

They walk silently through the woods, their intertwined hands swinging between them in the warm spring night. The two don't even realize they've made it to the Quarry until they see the other side of the cliff, plopping down in the gravel surrounded by the sounds of crickets. El leans her head against Mike's shoulder, his arm tightly

around her waist and absentmindedly rubbing his thumb against her denim jeans.

"I think they're gonna get a divorce," he whispers into the night. Mike's sure El doesn't even hear him because of the moment of silence that passes until he hears, "Deevorce?"

"It's when two people who are married aren't together anymore," he says simply, "usually because they don't love each other or they can't stop fighting. I think they have to sign a paper and then one of them moves out."

That's when it really dawns on Mike - his family will never be the same after this. His dad will move out and his mom will be the only parent of the household, the second chair on the right will always be empty at the dining room table, and the spot where the La-Z-Boy is in the living room will probably be empty after Ted takes it with him.

El moves her head off his shoulder when she feels her boyfriend stiffen beneath her and her heart drops when she realizes she's crying.

"Mike," she whispers, his head snapping towards her as he angrily wipes the tears away.

"I'm sorry, El," he croaks, "I'm so sorry, I ignored your calls and now I'm being stupid and crying like a wimp and I'm-"

"Mike," she says softly, "it's okay."

And then, at those words, he breaks; because it's so not okay. Hot tears fall from his eyes and he brings his lanky knees up to bury his face in them. He hears and feels his own sobs rack through his body before El's kneeling in front of him and softly running her hand through his hair.

"It's not okay, El," he says, bringing his face up to meet hers, "my-my dad is supposed to love my mom and he just makes her cry and get mad and he doesn't even care about me or-"

A squeaky sob breaks off his words and he shakes his head in defeat, feeling upset and angry and embarrassed.

El throws her arms around him, sitting crisscrossed in between his long legs and holding him tightly around his neck. He buries his face into her shoulder, his hair tickling her chin and she just silently holds him.

She's not sure how long they sit there when she hears his crying has stopped and he pulls back, face red and eyes watery. Her lips automatically pull into a frown at the sight of him so defeated.

"I'm-"

"Don't," El says firmly, "do not say you're sorry."

He purses his lips together, refusing to look anywhere but the tree stump a few feet away.

Suddenly, El's dainty hand is making its way towards his face and she wipes the wetness off of his smooth skin, leaning in to kiss both his cheeks softly.

"I care about you. And your mom and Holly and Nancy care about you. And Dustin, and Will, and Max, and Lucas, and Hopper. We all care about you. So if your dad can't see how good you are then....he's fucking stupid."

Mike's eyes grow wide, never hearing El so blatantly drop an f-bomb. A laugh bubbles out of him and El smiles, knowing the use of one of Dustin's favorite curses would get her boyfriend to smile.

He can't help but admire the way the smile lights up her face, her light brown eyes soft and her long curly hair all laying on her left shoulder. He doesn't know how or why or what he did to deserve her but he does know he never wants to lose her.

"Thank you, El," he says, reaching out to place a warm hand on her knee.

She smiles in that shy way she always does before she leans in to kiss him and in no longer than three-seconds do their lips meet. His mouth is slightly salty from the tears that fell down his face but El barely notices as Mike's hand cups her cheek, his thumb caressing her skin causing her to smile against his lips.

They pull back after a moment, Mike moving his head slightly to press his lips to her forehead softly. A calmness settles over them and they just stand there, unconsciously swaying while pressed up against one another.

"Guess we should go," he mumbles against her head, his heart sinking at the prospect of going back to his house tonight.

"Can you come over?"

Mike looks down, his eyebrows furrowed together.

"Tonight?" he asks, met with his girlfriend's simple nod. "I don't think Hopper will like that," he says apprehensively.

She shakes her head, grabbing his hand and slowly dragging them to the direction of the cabin, "he won't mind."

Once again hand-in-hand, the two walk in a comfortable silence surrounded by large oak trees and the smell of fresh air.

"I won't ever treat you like that," Mike blurts out suddenly, causing El to stop walking and look up at him questioningly.

"I mean I'm not saying we're going to get married, that'd be crazy, we're only fourteen," he rambles, "but, I just want you to know that I'll always do my best to make you happy, El. "

She feels herself get warm all over by his words, the look in his eyes mixed with his soft tone making her heart soar. "I know," she responds quietly, squeezing his cold hand.

If there's anything El's sure of, it's that lanky, fourteen-year-old Mike Wheeler is already more of a man than his father.